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### Understanding a Disagreement About Replacing Tests with Projects in Schools

For this assignment I talked to two classmates about whether teachers should replace tests with projects as the main way students are evaluated. I chose this topic because testing is such a part of education today especially with AI becoming more integrated into our daily lifestyle some people still worry if exams really measure learning. Our conversation took place in Olin in a study room. Which lasted about 47 minutes. We all brought ideas based on our majors personal beliefs and life experiences about what helps students learn best. We agreed that classes should help students build skills but we disagreed about whether tests or projects are the best way to measure that learning.

Ade supported the idea that teachers should move away from tests and rely more on projects. He brought up an example from his info 1300 class. In his perspective tests often measure short-term memorization rather than real understanding. Students may study hard for an exam remember the material enough to pass and then forget it soon after. Projects on the hand require students to engage with a topic for a longer period. For example students may need to research a topic analyze information work with classmates and present their ideas. This process encourages students thinking and problem-solving skills that are useful outside of the classroom.

Another participant, William also supported project-based learning. He said that projects better reflect how people actually work in the world. In careers people are not expected to simply recall information from memory. Instead they are asked to solve problems communicate ideas

clearly and create meaningful work. From this perspective projects help students develop skills such as teamwork, creativity and communication. William said that replacing traditional exams with projects could make learning more engaging and better prepare students for future careers.

During the conversation I connected this argument to my experience growing up in Washington, D.C. In my school one of my favorite teachers Mr. Strickland often assigned work that required us to apply what we learned rather than just memorize information. While we still had tests many classes also included projects, presentations and other assignments that allowed students to show an understanding of the material. I found that these types of assignments helped me engage more with the subject and develop skills that were useful beyond the classroom.

My school was also known for its academic reputation and was ranked among the top high schools in the city. The culture of the school emphasized discipline, critical thinking and high expectations for students. Looking back I think the focus on work and real-world applications played an important role in the success of many students. Because of this experience I tend to view project-based learning as an approach that can help students develop important intellectual and practical skills.

However, Ade. Argued that traditional tests should still play an important role in education. From his perspective tests provide an standardized way to evaluate what students know. When teachers give exams they can easily determine whether students understand specific concepts or have mastered certain skills. Tests also make it easier to compare performance across students and identify areas where additional instruction may be needed.

He also pointed out that projects can sometimes be more subjective when it comes to grading. Different teachers may evaluate projects differently depending on their expectations or interpretation of the assignment. In addition, many projects involve group work, which can make

it hard to determine how much each individual student contributed. In contrast tests require students to demonstrate their knowledge making it easier to assess individual understanding.

Another issue that came up during the conversation was the practicality of just relying on projects. Projects usually just require more time for both students and teachers. Teachers have to design assignments monitor student progress and evaluate complex work, which can be challenging in large classes. Will shared that while projects can be valuable they might not always be practical as the form of evaluation.

As the conversation continued I began to see strengths in both perspectives. My personal experiences made me appreciate the benefits of project-based learning the deeper engagement it can create with academic material. At the time I understood the argument that tests can provide structure and clarity when evaluating students. Of eliminating tests completely I suggested that a balanced approach might work best. Teachers could combine types of assessments, such as projects, presentations and exams to evaluate multiple aspects of learning.

This idea of balance became a part of the discussion. One suggestion was that tests could still be used to measure knowledge while projects could be used to evaluate critical thinking and the ability to apply concepts. By combining these approaches educators might create a complete system of assessment that reflects the complexity of learning.

Looking back on the conversation I think it was productive because everyone approached the topic respectfully and thoughtfully. Of trying to prove that one perspective was completely right we tried to understand the reasoning behind each viewpoint. The participant who supported project-based learning focused on creativity, engagement and preparation for real-world challenges. Ade, who supported tests emphasized fairness, accountability and consistency in

evaluation. These different priorities helped explain why people might disagree about how students should be assessed.

At the time there were a few ways the conversation could have been stronger. First we focused more on just heavily experiences rather than research about education. For example we did not discuss studies that compare the effectiveness of project-based learning and traditional testing. Including research might have helped us evaluate the arguments critically instead of relying mainly on anecdotal examples.

Another area we could have gone deeper in how assessment methods might vary depending on the subject being taught. Some subjects, such as mathematics or science may rely on tests to measure specific skills and problem-solving ability. Other subjects, such as history or the social sciences may benefit more from projects that allow students to explore ideas and present arguments. Thinking about these differences might have helped us develop a odd understanding of when each method works best.

Finally, we could have talked more about how schools might implement project-based learning on a larger scale. Teachers would likely need training and resources to design effective project-based assignments. Without the support simply removing tests might create new challenges rather than improving the education system.

Overall, the conversation helped me better understand the complexity of evaluating student learning. The disagreement was not about whether tests or projects are better. Instead it was about how education systems balance goals, such as fairness, accountability, creativity and meaningful learning. By discussing these perspectives the conversation helped me appreciate the value of both tests and projects, in assessing student learning.